

Remarks on Senate Action on Tobacco Legislation and an Exchange With Reporters

June 17, 1998

The President. Good afternoon. The vote that was just completed in the Senate clearly shows that a bipartisan majority of 57 clearly supports tough legislation to protect the children of this country from tobacco. Needless to say, I am very disappointed that a Republican minority blocked the legislation from being voted on.

Today, like every other day, 3,000 young children start to smoke, and 1,000 of them will have their lives shortened because of it. If more Members of the Senate would vote like parents rather than politicians, we could solve this problem and go on to other business of the country.

I have been working for 3 years now to protect our children from the dangers of tobacco. I want the tobacco lobby and its allies on Capitol Hill to know that, from my point of view, this battle is far from over.

Q. Sir, what's your strategy, what do you do now?

The President. Well, the Senate has to come back to it, but they have to do it in a hurry if we're going to act. After all, we only have 6 weeks until the August recess—not quite that—and then we have only a month or so when they come back, the month of September, because they will doubtless want to go home in October to campaign.

So the parameters of this bill are well-known—what has to be done to get a bill that can not only pass but can actually be effective, not only in raising the price of cigarettes but in limiting advertising and having smoking cessation programs and giving the public health money out there, the research money we need—everybody knows what has to be done.

We showed a lot of flexibility here in trying to work with the Members of the Senate. We had a tax cut in there to deal with the marriage penalty for people with incomes under \$50,000. We had some more antidrug money in there. The lawyer fee issue was addressed in the amendment most recently adopted. We can do this, and we need to do it and do it promptly.

There is not a lot of time, but I think it would be a great mistake for those who believe that because of the \$40 million ad campaign by the tobacco industry, which has gone unan-

swered and which has a lot of things in it which are just false, that they can now have a free ride on this to walk away from 1,000 lives a day. We don't have a free ride to walk away from 1,000 lives a day. And I believe we can do it.

Q. Is it really dead? Isn't it really dead, Mr. President?

The President. No, I don't think it is dead.

Q. You were depending on it for a lot of tax revenue, Mr. President. If you don't get it, where do you find that revenue?

The President. That's not entirely true. It is true that a lot of the things that I think should be funded in terms of giving this money back to the States, who are out a lot of money because they spent a fortune treating people on tobacco-related illnesses, could be used to help children and families with things like child care. The Senate voted for that, and I thought it was a good amendment.

But the most important thing here is not that. The most important thing is to protect children from the dangers of tobacco. And that is at the nub of this and that is what needs to be put front and center. And if they will do it, we can still do this. But they have to hurry. There's not a lot of time.

Q. Mr. President—

The President. Mr. Bowles is handling all the details of this, and I think I should let him come up and talk about it.

Q. Mr. President, do you think there will be political consequences for the people if this bill fails?

The President. I certainly hope there will be, and there should be. I think that there are those who believe there won't be because the public has been treated to \$40 million of unanswered advertising by their allies. And they believe that the opinion that may be held in certain selected districts or whatever today is the one that will hold at election day. I don't believe that's true. I think when the American people understand fully what has been going on, they won't like what they see, and they will be worried about these children. They nearly always—the public

almost always gets it right when they have enough time, and they've got plenty of time.

So I think we need to do this.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:15 p.m. in the Briefing Room at the White House. The transcript made available by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Chief of Staff Erskine Bowles.

Remarks at the Pritzker Architecture Prize Dinner

June 17, 1998

Thank you very much. Mr. Piano, congratulations, and thank you for your marvelous remarks. Professor Scully, thank you for the almost breathtaking education in such a short few moments. I thank J. Carter Brown and the prize jury and Jay and Cindy Pritzker and indeed the entire Pritzker family for this prize and for their many contributions to our Nation.

Frank Lloyd Wright once said that every great architect is necessarily a poet. He must be a great original interpreter of his time, his day, his age. Renzo Piano has certainly done that, and we congratulate him and thank him for his many gifts to our age.

Your creations will endure as some of our century's most timeless gifts to the future. As Hillary said, we have invited all the American people to take part in a national celebration of the coming millennium, challenging individuals and communities across our country to think about what values and heritage we carry with us into the future, what gifts we want to leave to the future, what kind of millennium we want to build. I invite all of you to lead us in that celebration.

Professor Scully once said that architecture is the continuing dialog between the generations. Well, tonight I thank all of you who have shaped that dialog, and I ask you to help to tell the American story in a new century. Our buildings, our monuments embody our frontier spirit, our exuberance, our optimism, our determination. In honoring the past, you can help us to imagine the future that will continue to be full of all those good qualities.

Let me say, tonight I listened carefully to what everyone else said. I couldn't remember—I couldn't believe that Professor Scully remembered the story I told him about the Jefferson Monument. I don't believe anyone pointed out that while James Hoban as a relatively unknown

young Irish architect actually built this White House, he did it by defeating an anonymous plan presented by Thomas Jefferson. [Laughter] But it is just as well, because Mr. Jefferson was the architect of something even more important than the White House. He built the American creed.

I might say parenthetically, in America ever since then, all politicians have tried to convince people that they were architects. If you listen to them speak long enough, you will be convinced that we were all born in log houses that we built ourselves. [Laughter]

But on a serious note, think of the American creed: We hold these truths to be self-evident, that we are all created equal, endowed by God with the right to life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness. We have banded together ourselves because we cannot fully pursue, protect, or enhance these rights alone as individuals. And we dedicate ourselves to form a more perfect Union.

In other words, we dedicate ourselves to an act of creating and building that will never be finished. An architect conceived of that.

And I say that to you tonight on the edge of the millennium because Hillary and I and the members of our administration who are here, many in the Congress, and others, we've worked very hard these last 5½ years to build a good house for America where everybody has a home, where we share the same foundation and the protection of the same roof and the same walls, where we respect our differences and value our unity.

And now together we have to build at least the foundations for America's home and the world's home in a new century. Yes, it will need steel and stone and wood and glass and light and air and trees and garden, music and quiet; it also will need a lot of vision and hope.